ACT III: PSYCHE DISCOVERS EROS

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ACT III: PSYCHE DISCOVERS EROS

by skeletontwins

Summary

After discovering who Hannibal truly is, Will confronts him.

Notes

This is somewhat of an epilogue/somewhat of an ending. I definitely recommend reading parts one and two first.

CHAPTER I

"It started with an autopsy," Will says, then swallows. "He guided us through taking apart the cadavre, the tox report, everything, and then asked us the C.O.D. I was the only one who got it right but it was— it was messed up, I think. I knew because it… it was like I *was* the dead body. That was the first time that had ever happened to me like that but I was so caught up in *him*, it didn't matter. We had lunch and it was so— feels like a dream now. Like something that happened to someone else.

"After lunch, he asked me to dinner and he said, I remember, he said my clothes were 'unacceptable'. It was between the lunch and the dinner that I met Gioconda. She's like— she was like a ray of sunlight. She was my first friend. He bought me a suit for the dinner and Gio and I opened it together and she was so excited. She just *burst* into my room with the garment bag. She sort of *fell* into my life. Manna from heaven. I hate the phrase 'the good days', but I guess that's all they were. He took me to Florence on his motorcycle. I taught him how to sail. The good days." Will snorts an ugly laugh. "Then we started sleeping together— he and I. That's likely when it went to— when it all went wrong. I remember… I wanted him so badly; the *smell* of him drove me crazy. I wanted more than just the sex though, I wanted it so badly that it *hurt*. I wanted it to *hurt*. I was like some— I don't even know what. I was like something that hadn't ever existed before. I was inventing something new. I loved him. I know that makes me some awful cliché, the blushing young maiden falls in love with the knight in shining armor, but I didn't care. I just knew I wanted him. That was all I knew.

"Everything got so screwed up after a while. I wanted to have sex, I didn't want to have sex, none of it really mattered.

"He killed Gio." Will has to take a pause after that. It's the first time he's said it, since he found out, but it's important, and he needs to say it. Someone has to carry it. "He posed her like a bride, waiting on her groom. I know everyone says this but I can't stop thinking about how young she is. Was. She was only 17. That's really young, right?

"He killed two more before I found out. I found… He drew everything. These really detailed sketches of all the bodies and I found them in his study. I remember… the moonlight, the way it fell on the sketchbook, it was so strange. Beautiful, maybe. Just— I ran. I ran away." Will doesn't cry. He's past tears, past sadness, past anger. Now is the time for action. "That was four months ago," Will adds finally, shifting on the uncomfortable wooden bench.

There's a dry chuckle which comes from the other side of the wooden plate— which is carved out with intricate filigree. "Usually one begins with days since their last confession," the priest says, his voice warm and inviting. "But you can always try that next time."

There's a pause, and Will frowns. "You're not going to call me a sinner?" Will asks bluntly. He sat down in the confession booth expecting that would be the outcome, prepared, needing to talk it out anyways. He's been called worse, and by worse people.

“It’s not a sin to fall in love with a bad person,” the priest says gently. “It’s human nature.” Human nature is not what got Will into this mess. Will feels as though he’s not a part of human nature at all, like he’s some kind of alien who escaped to Earth and doesn’t know what to do with himself now. *Human nature,* Will thinks, *is to sense something’s wrong and turn the other direction, not pursue it.* In another life, Will’s chasing storms, feeling the hair raise on the back of his neck and running *towards* instead of *away* . “Fornication outside of holy matrimony is sinful, and I ask you to consider your actions, and the motivations behind your actions. That is your penance.” Will leans his forehead against the little wooden divider, though it’s probably against the rules or something. “Were you fulfilled?” the priest is asking him. “Did it make you feel better?” And Will doesn’t have an answer for him, but he supposes that’s the point. Mostly, he thinks the whole sex-outside-a-marriage-is-sin thing is bullshit, but he’s self-aware enough to admit that sex between a seventeen year-old foreigner with no connections and a twenty-three year-old doctor-slash-prodigy might not be the best idea. “Did it make you happy?”

“No,” Will admits softly. But in a way, it did. It did make him happier, didn’t it? If only for a moment? If only with the lights off? Maybe that was enough for him. Maybe it could’ve been enough if Hannibal hadn’t— wasn’t— but that’s an impossible train of thought. There’s no Hannibal without Il Mostro and truly, no Il Mostro without Hannibal. They are one and the same, just as Will thought he and Hannibal were. “Thank you, Father,” Will says after a long pause, and then gets up, leaves the confessional.

Later, Will sits outside in the cool Spring air. The sky is a pale blue and the air smells fresh and slightly of pollen. Bees buzz happily and students mill about, wearing light cardigans and button downs instead of thick sweaters and coats for the first time of the year. The flowers are in bloom. There’s a sense of satisfaction in the air, floating along with the pollen, as if everything is going to be alright, or at least the other students give that impression.

Will initially sat down with the intention of reflecting on his confession. He wanted to go over it, consider what the priest said, (‘*Were you fulfilled?*’) but he can’t find it within himself. Instead, he closes his eyes and does what he finds himself doing often these days: conjuring Gio.

He builds her in his mind: her fashionable shoes, her grass-stained white knee-socks, her ruddy, red knees, her mid-length wool skirts, plaid in pattern, her maroon button down and accompanying gray sweater, her delicate shoulders and long arms, always held slightly away from her body, as though she were about to take flight. And finally, Will pictures her smile. Her button-nose. Her sparkling eyes, filled with life. And her hair, long and blonde and beautiful. Her— *everything*. She was perfect, Will decides, knowing he’s remembering her differently than she was, flawless, but he can’t bring himself to remember her any other way.

He hasn’t truly seen her— as in, seen her without intentionally imagining her, *hallucinated* her, is perhaps the better word, in the past four months, since the crime scene at the orchard. Will remembers the newspaper that day: *IL MOSTRO STRIKES AGAIN*. And then, he saw her once more, in the dream. But not since then. Only in his mind, only as a recreation, like

one of Hannibal's carefully penciled sketches, drawn in perfect detail but lacking some kind of humanity somehow. Will checks his watch. He's nearly late for his philosophy class.

He rushes, and makes it in time.

"*Ciao classe*," the friendly, slightly-balding teacher is saying, his voice gruff but pleasant. "Will," he nods at Will as Will takes a seat. The teacher then turns to the white board and writes out *L'EROS E IL MITO DELLA PSICHE.* Will sets his messenger bag down at his feet and leans forward slightly, feeling a mild interest in the subject at hand, though lately, any interest Will has shown in his studies has been manufactured. Will does as well as he needs to get by, and doesn't drink, doesn't see people, doesn't look at the contents of the shoebox under his bed; he prepares. But for now, he's in class, and on the board is written, *Eros and the Myth of Psyche*.

The teacher, as a few more students trickle into the room, begins to explain the day's pursuit. He says, in lilting Italian, that since the year is coming to a close, he's found it better in years past to focus on something enjoyable for the last few classes— such as Greek mythology or applying philosophical ideas to popular films. Today, he says, they'll be going over the myth of Psyche and Eros, their love and ultimate demise. He begins to unfold the myth:

Psyche was a beautiful maiden of Greece. In fact, she was so heavenly, people began to traverse the country and then, the world, to see her beauty— word of it traveled so far, it even reached Mount Olympus. Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, became enraged with jealousy. She called upon her son, Eros, to fly down to Earth on his gentle wings and bewitch each man who fell in love with Psyche to become poisoned with disgust and hatred, and turn away from her.

But when Eros met Psyche, he found himself to be no better than man.

He fell in love with her, and knew that he could not live without her. He watched as she refused each proposal, remained unmarried, as her mother and father grew more and more desperate. Eventually, her parents brought Psyche to an oracle, to predict the future of her hand. Eros devised a plan, and guided the oracle to prophesize that Psyche would marry a man with the face of a beast, whom she would never be able to see, who would be waiting for her from atop a tall mountain. Her parents, though devastated, brought her to the mountain, and blessed her wedding to the beast-faced-man. They were joined together and on their wedding night, and he held her so tenderly, loved her so dearly, and insisted she make one promise: to never look upon him while he was asleep. And because she loved him, she acquiesced.

There were good days and, contented and joyful, Psyche happily told her sisters of her successful marriage. Jealous of her triumph, the sisters poisoned Psyche's mind with fear, convincing her that her husband was not only a beast, but a monster, and would eventually

kill her. Though she did not believe them, the seed had been planted, and Psyche knew what she must do.

One night, after her husband had gone to sleep in his private quarters, she crept into the room with an oil lamp in one hand, dagger in the other. What she expected— wasn't what she found. She found a sleeping Eros, beautiful and untouchable, a God, perfect. She reached out to touch him, forgetting the lamp in her hand, and the oil spilled onto his cheek. He awoke to see her gazing upon him and, in a fury, told her she had betrayed him in the way which hurt him most. He flew away, into the night, never to return.

The teacher finishes describing the myth and begins on the assignment— something about how this relates to our understanding of the root words 'psyche' and 'eros', but Will's not listening. Something is unmoored within him. Class is eventually dismissed and Will leaves feeling shaken for an unknown reason, his stomach turning and the myth mutating and evolving in his mind. He pictures Hannibal with a beast's head, Hannibal with wings. Will walks back to his dorm and imagines discovering Hannibal in a way that would allow Hannibal to know he was being discovered; how Hannibal would react, what he would say. Would he flee? Would he kill Will? Would Hannibal eat him?

Will shakes his head. He's up the stairs and at his own door. He opens it, and his dorm bares shocking resemblance to how it looked when Will first moved in: nearly completely barren. There is no corkboard, there are no case files, no suits in the closet or shoes on the floor, except for the ones which Will brought with him from America. The only proof that Gio or Hannibal ever existed in Will's life is burning a hole under Will's bed, in a shoebox, half-discarded, half-hidden.

Will unearths the box without knowing why. He still feels disturbed with the subject they discussed in class, still thoughts of Hannibal swirl in his mind, and he opens the box.

Topmost is a stack of letters, each addressed to Will in a neat, dancing script, all unopened. Will picks up the first, thick, beautiful envelope, and tears it open.

CHAPTER II

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will considers Hannibal's letters as he walks across campus, going over them in his mind, his eidetic memory making the activity easy, in a mechanical sense. Emotionally, it takes a toll. But Will can't help himself.

Dearest Will,

Since the dawn of time, before humans were capable of speech, we strived to communicate. Just this December, in the Southeast of France, the oldest cave paintings to date were discovered, nearly perfectly preserved. It tells the story of the animals seen, conquered, and eaten and one, beautiful, partial Venus. I wonder, why do cave paintings seldom depict humanity? Did we simply accept the fact of humanity, without need for preservation? Or… were we frightened of something which we found within ourselves?

In contrast to cave paintings, the letter is a unique form of communication, as the individual on the receiving end may choose to leave it unopened altogether, and that is in fact the default. A letter is unspoken, until a listener wishes otherwise. Until you wish otherwise, Will, it will be as though these words do not exist at all.

I will admit, this gives me a sense of unsupervised freedom in writing this. I feel as though I am placing the cat in Schrodinger's box, and until you open it, it is both written and unwritten. Therefore, I may write freely.

I love you, Will.

Relentlessly and unconditionally, I love you. You have become the object of all my desires and I find with each encroaching moment without your presence I become more and more destitute, and desperate. Before you, I thought myself no longer capable of love. I was, as you might say, heartbroken when we met, and acting like a disquieted child, throwing a monumental and destructive temper tantrum up and down the beautiful streets of Florence. I am not a person of shame or regret, but I will admit I am embarrassed by some of my past actions. I acted in rage and fury, making ugliness where beauty could be. But you, you reminded me of that potential in the world for something beautiful, Will. You are something beautiful. And I love you.

I find myself wishing for you at my side each time I attend the opera, when I am in the herb garden, as I cook. I wish for your off-handed remarks, your disparaging commentary, your insight. If only I could hear the sound of your voice as I work, I would be content. You are my contentment, and my heart.

I cannot know why you chose to end the investigation, or our relationship, and I wish to respect your privacy on the matter. I can only hope that you are well, that this letter finds you in your own state of contentment, in your own world, on your own time. I hope my words do not distress you, though I imagine they must. I am writing this in a fit of selfishness but still, all I want is your happiness. For, if you have chosen to open this letter, and read these words into existence, then I must thank you, for you have read my love for you into existence, for you have read me into existence, and I owe you my life. Thank you.

Always,
Hannibal Lecter

Hannibal has signed his name under the printed version and Will could likely forge the signature; it's so strongly imprinted on his mind. Will finds Hannibal's words have a limited effect on him. He feels so forgiveness, no mercy. He thinks of the fourth letter, the shortest of the collection.

Dearest Will,

I realized this morning that I had forgotten the sound of my mother's singing. I can remember the lyrics to the songs which she sang, the melody even, but not the sound. Her voice was dappled sunlight in my mind, and it's now as though the sun has set.

Grief is so strange— the way which it has followed me through life, a stray cat which I must feed, always at my heel. Like a stray cat, a strange affection has grown within me for my grief, for there have been many long nights when it was my only companion.

I remember vividly in the early days of my grief, how I resented those who attempted to impart their wisdom. I will not tell you that your situation will improve, God forbid. I will tell you that I hope you will someday foster an affection for pain, as it may be the only way to survive it.

Always,
Hannibal Lecter

Will wonders with a morbid curiosity if Hannibal is conscious of his affection for *other's* pain, or is only cognizant of his affection for his own. Will's nearly to his destination, and finally considers the final letter which Hannibal sent, dated nearly a month ago now.

Dearest Will,

I wrote to my Aunt, Lady Murasaki, long after she wished I would cease in the practice. I asked— or, rather, begged, for her response. I told her I wished only to see her once more, that I would do anything for her, that I saw her in everything, everywhere, and on and on. I believe I made her uncomfortable, or even afraid. I will not make that mistake a second time, though perhaps I already have. This will be my final letter. It is possible we will speak again, but I will not continue to write you without response. I do not wish for this to be punitive action— in fact I believe it to be restorative by nature. I will give you the time and space you need to heal from what has caused you pain, whether it be myself or the cruel world in which we live. I can imagine the pain you are in, though I will admit I don't wish to. You have suffered a tremendous deal for someone so young, and so bright. It is undeserved. Never think otherwise.

I want to end our correspondence on the note that I do love you, still. I will be here in Florence, should you ever need me. I do not wish to scare you off but I must express the lengths to which I would go for you, Will. I would move mountains for you. I could make anything happen on your behalf and then, anything cease. I would kill for you. I love you always, Will; it is inescapable to the both of us. I must ask you, who else can say that?

Before this letter ends, and indeed it feels as though the end is catching up with me (perhaps I have said too much already), I will share with you one more thing. One of my favorite contemporary novels happens to be Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five. I find it so emblematic of the times, and to be such a perversion of what we are raised to believe is best for us, such an open critique of what is certainly not, but I digress. Within that novel, my favorite quote is the following: "Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt." *Take that with you, Will. Run away with it.* Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt.

Always,

Hannibal Lecter

Will doesn't know what to make of Hannibal's last letter. He finds within himself, deep within himself, a desire for more. He wants more from Hannibal than what Hannibal's already given him, and what could that possibly be? What could Hannibal give Will that he hasn't already? Will supposes he knows the answer. Hannibal could stop killing. Hannibal could deny his nature. He won't. Ever. It doesn't matter now, though. Will has moved on. Will has moved on inevitably. This was the determined fate, truly. Will was always going to lose out on Hannibal, be left, leave, survive it. It seems impossible that it can all be true at once, and yet…

Will's at his destination. The front office. He does not smile at the new student volunteer sitting at the desk, and he seems to take the fact personally, frowning at Will deeply. Will doesn't bother with him. Will turns to the phone attached to the far wall and knows what he's going to do — what he *must* do. He dials from memory. Hannibal picks up on the third ring.

Chapter End Notes

Okay I know Hannibal being a Slaughterhouse-Five fan (or a fan of anything super contemporary for that matter) seems pretty out there but I love the idea of him reading this book about the preciousness of life and completely missing the point. Or getting the point but bla bla bla cognitive dissonance, or something. I just love the ridiculousness of Hannibal and mashing him with other ridiculous things. Anyways, I hope the reference didn't take you too much out of the story.

CHAPTER III

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will is admittedly anxious, awaiting the Benz at the gates of St. Gabriel. Will hasn't left campus often since cutting contact with Hannibal, and standing at the gates always reminds him of walking away from Hannibal. So he stands in the mowed grass, in the clear Spring night, off to the side of the main entrance to St. Gabriel. Will toes a muddy spot in the ground with the sole of his ratty tennis shoe. He's nervous. He told Hannibal he wanted to see him at the apartment, and nothing more. Hannibal had made an effort to make his voice neutral but Will feels as though, after everything that's happened, he can see right through Hannibal's veil. Hannibal is immeasurably and cautiously excited to be hearing from Will. Hannibal's careful hopefulness is what's making Will so nervous; the idea that Hannibal has expectations, likely so vivid that he's making the conscious effort to reel them in. *That* makes Will's skin crawl as he waits.

He doesn't wait long. Hannibal arrives to pick him up on the motorcycle.

Will's surprised, to say the least. Surprised and offended. If Hannibal thought getting Will on the back of a motorcycle would stitch together their fucked up, torn and ragged, separate lives with golden thread, he is sorely mistaken. Will tries to quell his fury. He's not here for anger. "Where's the Benz?" Will asks as he takes the helmet from Hannibal and puts it on, as if it's easy for him. As if it doesn't bring back a flood of memories so soured by the effects of time and circumstance that Will can nearly taste them in his mouth. He climbs onto the motorcycle and winds his arms around Hannibal's waist, holding him tight, trying not to think about how it makes him feel.

"In the shop," Hannibal replies, his accent muffled from behind his helmet. Will, despite himself, scowls in disbelief, and then the engine revs to life, a nearly startling sound, and they're off into the Tuscan night.

They arrive at Hannibal's apartment building around 8 PM, just after the sun has set, when the sky is still a soft blue, barely pin-pricked by starlight. Will can't help but look up at the sky as they walk towards the front entrance of the apartment building, enjoying the peaceful moment, if only for a moment. Then reality comes crashing into the foreground and he looks at the back of Hannibal's head as Hannibal opens the door in front of them, then Hannibal turns slightly, holding the door open for Will. Will approaches Hannibal slowly, the way one might approach a wounded animal, or a dangerous one, and Will thinks back on the million times they have enacted this little ritual; Hannibal holding the door for Will. It feels like home to Will, or perhaps more accurately, a home burned down. The remnants of something that housed love, and does no longer. Will finds he himself is a remnant of something that was and is no longer. But none of that will matter. Will brushes past Hannibal, entering the building.

It's not until they're up the stairs and through the door to Hannibal's apartment that either of them speaks. Surprising himself, Will is the first to open his mouth. "It's nice outside," he says, and means it, as Hannibal takes from him his ratty coat and school jacket. When Will looks up at Hannibal's face, Hannibal's expression is instantly readable, and almost as instantly dissipated, dissolved into a cool, emotionless mask. But Will saw. Will saw a brief look which said: *We know one another better than to make banal small talk about the weather, Will.* In a way, Will supposes he's right. Hannibal knows Will better than any other living person. *And whose fault is that?* Will's brain supplies bitterly.

Hannibal leads Will through the apartment to the dining room, where two places are set, not catty-corner, as they were at the dinner parties which Hannibal threw and Will attended, but across the table from one another width-wise, only a few feet away but still, carefully distanced. Will notes, also, that Hannibal has removed himself from his place at the head of the table. Will's not sure what to make of that. He guesses he doesn't want to think about it. Will takes his seat silently, feeling strange after his own weather-comment, and waits patiently as Hannibal brings out the first course: beautifully-prepared cod, which Will recognizes, and some kind of colorful vegetable medley, which Will does not. It looks appetizing, as Hannibal's food always does, but surprisingly approachable, as Hannibal's food seldom does. Hannibal speaks a little about the food and its history, describing it as a 'peasant dish', and Will mostly tunes him out, focusing on cooling his nerves and keeping his breathing steady. Riding the motorcycle or directly after dismounting it, Hannibal might have mistaken Will's nerves for thrill, but sitting in the dining room doing nothing strenuous, Hannibal would certainly tune into Will's anxiety, and perhaps question it. Anyways, it's not worth the risk, and Will needs to calm down. He practices four-step breathing, where he pauses after each inhale and exhale, counting the breath as four parts: *inhale, pause, exhale, pause*. This is effective in calming Will, and soon his breathing is even without his consideration, and he's able to understand what Hannibal's asking him; something about how school is going, how it's wrapping up.

Will considers the myth of Eros and Psyche, and their love.

He remembers the vision he had; Hannibal with soft wings. Too beautiful for this world. A god. "Do you know Psyche? From Greek mythology?" Will prompts Hannibal, knowing he'll know what Will means. Will asks anyway. Just to see if Hannibal will monologue. And he does.

"Psyche, as in, her love for Eros? Yes, I am familiar." Hannibal takes a sip from a wine glass filled with water. "She was said to be as beautiful as a butterfly's wings, and as delicate. Eros was sent to Earth as her curse, and met her as her love. It was that love for Eros drove her to unveil him, and where she expected a monster, she found a god." Hannibal adjusts the placement of the glass slightly, a nearly compulsive gesture, Will recognizes. "Mythos is the great mirror in which humanity views itself. I often find it impossible to look away. Tell me, Will, who bears your reflection?"

Will swallows. He says, "I'm not a monster."

They eat in tense silence for a while longer— so tense even Will can sense it. There is undeniably something in the air, an energy buzzing between Will and Hannibal, as there so often is, but tonight it's an air of unspoken apprehension. But it doesn't matter. Will glances at his wristwatch. "May I use your phone?" he asks Hannibal.

Hannibal swallows his bite and Will watches his throat work, watching and wishing he wasn't watching. Hannibal nods and then tips his head towards the archway which leads to the next room over. "The house phone is in the kitchen," Hannibal says. Hannibal shifts the chair back and stands up as Will does, which Will thinks is some kind of weird etiquette thing, and then takes his seat again as Will turns his back to leave the room. Strangely, or maybe not so strangely, Will doesn't like having his back to Hannibal. His nerves begin to return. He walks away quickly, passing through the archway.

The kitchen is set up so the phone is hooked up to the wall to the right of the archway, hidden by perspective from the dining room, meaning as Will goes deeper into the room he can make his call without Hannibal seeing him, which is ideal. Will, of course, knew this long before he arrived at the apartment this evening. He crosses the room and, before he picks up the phone, pulls the Smith & Wesson Model 627 from the waistband of his trousers. He press-checks the gun. Eight perfect, shining bullets. Will returns the revolver to its place in his waistband and then finds his body has relaxed slightly, less tension in his shoulders. He, in fact, feels a wash of calmness crash over him like a wave, until he is submerged within it, until it is all around him. *Everything will be alright* , Will thinks to himself. He knows what he must do. He picks the cream-colored phone up from its matching cradle. The phone is sleek and expensive but doesn't compete with the old-world feeling the kitchen omits. Will notes this and other details of the room (the glint of the kitchen knives, which are magnetically attached to the wall, the rack of spices above the counter, the vase of greenery set next to it) with a dispassionate curiosity as he dials *112* . This, one way or another, is the last time he will ever see the inside of this apartment.

"*Qual è la sua emergenza?*" the person on the other end of the line asks after one ring.

Will doesn't bother with Italian, hearing the slight English accent in the responder's voice. *Shallow men believe in luck,* Will's father used to say. No matter. Will has no need for luck tonight. Tonight is a determined fate. "There has been a murder," Will says, his voice so flat, so unlike himself, if he weren't so entrenched in his own tranquility he would perhaps be frightened. The words seem to echo loudly in the silent room, though Will knows he spoke in a quiet, if not hushed tone. *There has been a murder. There has been a murder. There has been a murder.*

Will opens his mouth to give Hannibal's address, but senses… *something.* A change in the atmosphere. He shifts his body slightly, turning his head, and sees Hannibal in the doorway.

Hannibal is standing stock-still, framed by the archway, the shadows seeming to paint his face as a strange spector, demonic almost. He looks like an illustration of the devil, drawn in reds and blacks. He tilts his head to one side, the only movement which signifies he's a living thing at all. "Is something wrong?" Hannibal asks, his voice as pale and flat as the moonlight

pouring in through the window. Will must admit this to himself, he realizes: he still loves Hannibal. Will wants to go to Hannibal. Will wants to be with him. He draws the Smith & Wesson.

Hannibal lunges for the kitchen knives.

Chapter End Notes

Qual è la sua emergenza: What's your emergency?

CHAPTER IV

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will fires three times, landing three separate slugs in the wall.

Hannibal is across the room from Will, the kitchen island between them, unphased. Suddenly, Hannibal crouches down, disappearing behind the island. Will holds the revolver straight out in front of him and moves slowly, circling the island. He notes that his hands are shaking, and yet he feels calm. It's a strange duality, and Will gets the sense that he's watching the scene through a lens, instead of just experiencing it. Just as Will is on the other side of the island, where Hannibal should be crouched on the floor, Will's grabbed from behind, a strong arm around his throat and another around his waist. Hannibal's holding Will against his chest tightly. Will doesn't panic. He doesn't panic as the arm around his waist releases. Hannibal holds a knife, raising it away from Will's body slightly, moving to stab Will is the abdomen, or perhaps gut him. Will does not panic. He simply twists his neck to an uncomfortable angle and bites down on Hannibal's forearm until he tastes blood. Hannibal doesn't so much as gasp, but he releases Will.

Will scrambles away as quickly as he can, swiveling to face Hannibal once again, far enough away to be out of range of the knife. He fires, clipping Hannibal's ear. Again, Hannibal's expression remains unmoved. He does not look hurt, or frightened, or even unnerved. He looks *thrilled* . "Stop going easy on me," Will says and realizes he's out of breath when he talks. His body seems to be nervous where his mind is not. Hannibal smiles his shark-like grin at Will, looking cat-got-canary rich.

Will's near the door to the hindquarters now, thankfully, and turns to run.

He makes his way through the hall, hearing Hannibal's calm footsteps behind him. Hannibal must think Will's making a mistake, going deeper into the house, but Will knows there's no point in trying to escape. There is no escape. There is only this: the two of them. Will twists his body as his feet fall and fires two shots over his shoulder. The second shot finds a home in Hannibal, and Hannibal finally lets out a pained sound: a soft grunt, a falter in his steps, a wavering of his ever-steady breath. Will shoulders the door open to Hannibal's bedroom, diving into the room.

He hides on the side of the large bed opposite the door, hidden from Hannibal's view but still, certainly, Hannibal knows where he is. It doesn't matter. Will looks briefly out the window behind him, hoping for red and blue flashing lights but seeing nothing but the calm Tuscan night. The polizia, Will knows, will arrive eventually. Will only wonders if they will find one body or two. He twists back into a crouching position, holding the gun out in front of him. He waits.

He waits only a few moments.

Will can hear the sounds of Hannibal's footsteps as he enters the room. He steps in through the doorway, then pauses, stops. Surveilling the room. Will leaps up and, seeing Hannibal's shadowy figure looming in the open doorway, fires a shot quickly.

He misses.

Hannibal takes a step forward, now in the light of the moon, which flows through the window, whose blackout curtains are open. Will can see that the left side of his button up is stained with blood, and a wound in his shoulder is bleeding profusely. Will's gun is still raised, aimed at Hannibal, but before he can fire again Hannibal lunges forward, managing to leap and crawl over the large bed at a preternatural speed, and land on the other side. For a split-second, he and Will are face to face, staring at one another, Will with wide eyes, Hannibal with a maskless, emotionless expression on his face, and perhaps it's the first time they're ever truly each other, with each other. Then, Hannibal drops the knife and pins Will to the wall using both hands, twisting his left wrist. Will swears it nearly breaks, it hurts so bad, and he's forced to drop the gun. " *Hello, Will,* " Hannibal whispers, almost in Will's ear, so close. He says Will's name, and Will hates himself for loving the sound. Hannibal forces both of Will's skinny wrists under one of his large hands, and then reaches down to pick up the knife. Will closes his eyes and knows, surely, that the last thing he will ever see will be Hannibal's face. *In the end,* Will thinks humorlessly, *I'm just like everybody else he's killed. Maybe he'll eat me.* Will doesn't believe in the afterlife, or God, and knows he will not see Gio again, will not see anything again, will die like a pig to slaughter, at Hannibal's hand. Like so many others before him. Will thinks to himself, *Not so special after all.*

Will blinks his eyes open when he hears a loud *thunk* sound and sees Hannibal with his arm outstretched to the right, fingers splayed. Will follows the direction of his arm and sees, on the far wall, the knife stuck into the wallpaper. It sticks there, marring the perfect pattern, and Will understands what Hannibal's saying before he opens his mouth. *I cannot kill you.*

"I cannot kill you," Hannibal says out loud. He releases his grip on Will's wrists. Will's back is still against the wall. Hannibal takes a step back, giving Will some space, and Will shakes out his aching wrists. Without taking his eyes off Hannibal, Will crouches down and retrieves the Smith and Wesson. The revolver seems to catch the light better than anything else in the room, and is nearly glowing. Hannibal kneels in front of Will, his shoulder still bleeding profusely. Will stands above him, and raises the revolver to Hannibal's forehead, finger on the trigger.

"I can't kill you," Will says after a long moment, lowering the gun. Will wants to hate himself for it, but he doesn't. He loves Hannibal. He's always loved Hannibal, and he probably always will. There's no point in wishing for anything else. The only thing Will would possibly want to change is the fact that he can't express himself the way Hannibal does; he can't tell Hannibal how much he loves him, and far forward and back his love reaches, how it encompasses him. He can only feel it, and feel it so deeply Hannibal *must* understand. "I can't," Will repeats, his voice broken, shattered, honest.

Sirens begin to sound in the distance.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the wait/short update. Final chapter coming soon!

CHAPTER V

Chapter Notes

> Well, folks, it took us two break-ups and a move across the country but I'm here, I finsihed it, I'm sorry for the wait, I love you, et cetera. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal dresses his wound at an impressive and nearly impossible speed, as the sirens grow louder and louder, nearer and nearer. Will hesitates at the door leaving the apartment. Hannibal turns to look at him for a long moment. “Do you trust me, Will?” Hannibal asks him finally. And what kind of question is that? *Do I trust you to do what?* Will thinks. *Keep me alive? Kill me? Save me?* Will supposes he does. He nods his head. Hannibal holds out a hand for Will to take, and he does.

Hannibal leads Will down the stairs and crosses the threshold, into the night air. Will expects Hannibal to lead Will to the Benz, but instead Hannibal takes Will to the motorcycle, which is parked on the street. “What about the car?” Will asks. Hannibal cuts Will a sideways glance as he removes two helmets from the storage unit on his motorcycle.

“In the shop,” Hannibal supplies simply, with a smirk. Will shakes his head. “I would not lie to you, Will,” Hannibal adds, then puts the helmet on. He hands Will his own helmet or, more accurately, the second helmet which Will has come to think of as his, and Will takes it from him. Will feels that old familiar fury bubble up within him and still, loves him. Will loves Hannibal, and all his deceit. And all his veils. All of him. Will climbs onto the back of the motorcycle and cuddles up to Hannibal, pressing his front to Hannibal’s back, resting his head against the back of Hannibal’s shoulder. Hannibal kicks up the stand and the motorcycle comes to life. Hannibal takes them away, into the night; Will doesn’t know where they’re going, but he doesn’t care. He’ll go anywhere with Hannibal.

They end up at a chapel. Where else?

There’s no priest present, no flowers, no decor, no people at all. The chapel is open, but empty. Will knows what they’re here for. He and Hannibal hold hands as they enter the building, Hannibal walking slightly ahead of Will, leading Will still. And Will follows.

Hannibal leads Will to the back of the chapel, near the steps leading to the altar. They walk the steps together until they stand at the top most step, beside one another. They turn to face each other. Will looks at Hannibal and tries, as he has so many times before, to imprint the planes and contours of Hannibal's beautiful face onto his eidetic memory, onto the inside of his eyelids. He knows he won't forget, but he tries just in case. He takes in Hannibal's high, delicate cheekbones, his fine, sharp nose, the bow of his pink lips. He takes in Hannibal's eyes: deep, dark, nearly red in the light, evocative. They draw Will in, as they always have. Will leans forward and up to kiss Hannibal but Hannibal stops him with a gentle hand against Will's chest.

"Traditionally," Hannibal begins, his voice soft, "this would begin with a welcoming of the guests and witnesses. Tonight, our only witness is God."

Will looks up at Hannibal. "Do you believe in God?" Will asks. What Will really means is, *Do you believe in a force more powerful than yourself?* thinking he knows the answer.

"God is sometimes referred to as the Cause," Will tries then to absorb Hannibal's accent, to remember it forever, to never let it go. He wants something he can have, something he can keep. "The Cause is neither good nor evil, neither kind nor merciful." Hannibal looks down at Will like an adoring God. "The Cause is the origin, and nothing more. I believe we will always come together, Will. This must be *determined* , and therefore must be caused by an origin. There is no other way." Will nods his head slowly, feeling drunk on adrenaline and Hannibal's words. "Now, if you will allow me, it is time to exchange vows." Will doesn't nod, but something in his face must change, and Hannibal begins. "Will, I…" Hannibal stops, and Will blinks the stars out of his eyes, and for the first time since they've met, Hannibal looks like a human being. "I have been thinking about what to say in this moment since we met all those months ago but I'm afraid I find myself… at a loss for words." And it's just like that. Hannibal is standing in front of Will, tears in Hannibal's eyes, Hannibal's chest rising and falling rapidly, Will's gaze fixed on him. Hannibal is so vulnerable, so person-like, Will doesn't know what to do with him. *He was never God. He was never anybody at all.* And Will loves him, more than he has ever loved or will ever love again. Maybe that's too much for any one person to carry, but Will feels like the luckiest person in all of history, to be allowed to carry it.

"You killed her," a voice says.

Will realizes it's his own.

"You killed her," Will repeats. "And I forgave you."

Hannibal blinks some of the tears out of his eyes and looks down at Will. Will looks up at him, holding his gaze, staring into his deep red-brown eyes. The color, Will realizes, is that of an animal's black fur, drenched in sunlight. Hannibal looks at Will, not like he's waiting for him to speak, but like he simply *knows* Will will continue. So Will does.

"I think you could do anything to me and I would let you. Everything you ever did to me… it was because you loved me. And me… I loved you before I ever knew," Will says, struggling not to hear cliché in his own voice. He takes a deep breath in and lets it out. "I don't know how much time we have left but… it doesn't matter. I've already spent a lifetime loving you.

And I'll find you in the next lifetime, too. I don't mind waiting." Will realizes he's smiling around his words, only because Hannibal smiles back, just slightly, just around the eyes.

Hannibal nods, looks away for a moment as though he's composing himself, then looks back at Will, his eyes no less teary. Hannibal grasps Will's two hands in his own, his palms calloused and dry, soft. "I love you," Hannibal says quietly. "I submit myself to you."

"I love you," Will echoes, meaning it just as intently and irrevocably as he did the very first time he said it. "I submit myself to you."

Hannibal leans in, and so does Will, and they kiss.

It's their first kiss as a married couple, and that strikes Will as very, very important. Will tries, for a single second, to hold desperately to the moment. If only he could squeeze the moment hard enough between his fingers, he would be allowed to never leave, to stay. But the kiss ends when Hannibal pulls away, and Will does too. They're separated, physically, but Will stills feels that mysterious sense in his body that something's changed.

" *We're married* ," Will whispers conspiratorially, leaning forward and grinning.

Hannibal dips his head forward and kisses Will again, nipping his bottom lip. "We are," he whispers in return, though something in his voice betrays the tragedy Will knows he can't help but see. It *is* tragic, isn't it? Will kisses Hannibal again, and again, and lets it brew in his stomach. The inevitability of it all strikes him. He was right, and so was Hannibal: they never could've avoided this. This is how it had to happen. *It was always you and me,* Will thinks to himself, trusting Hannibal to hear his thoughts. *Always.*

Will closes the door to his room behind him. He rests against it and closes his eyes. His life, he's sure, is about to become filled with police interviews again. God, all these goddamn polizia are enough to make Will reconsider the Bureau. But then, not really. As long as none of this gets him in any serious trouble, it's all only served to make Will even more sure he wants to… Well, he wants to catch the bad guy. Maybe it's not always that simple, but Will sure would like if it was.

He unknots the tie of his school uniform— God, was he at school earlier today? *Or* , Will supposes *, it was yesterday, now* . Yesterday. Their wedding. It'll always be the day of their wedding, every year. No matter what happens. Will finds a little solace in that thought, and sits on his bed, and unlaces his shoes. He mulls over his own numbness, what is likely shock which seemed to begin to affect him as he watched Hannibal speed away on the motorcycle for the last time. He mulls over, also, Hannibal's last words to him.

"Will!" Hannibal calls, his voice projecting from his chest but not overtly loud, mindful of the hour. Will turns back and sees a sight to behold: Hannibal on his motorcycle, feet set on the pavement on either side of the bike, body twisted to face Will, helmet under one arm. Hannibal has a serene smile on his face, something which manages not to look out of place

on him. Will wants to run to him, run away with him, but restrains himself. They still have their 'always'. That's all Will needs. Hannibal finally speaks, "Pysche and Eros… they reunite."

Chapter End Notes

MUWaHAHAHAHA you thought it was over??? No way!!!!!!!! No, but seriously, I do plan on returning to this Will and this Hannibal some day in the future, however far off that may be. I <3 you guys and especially those of you who stuck around when I wasn't able to. Forever thank you for reading. (Always).

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